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ABSTRACT

Teachers and curriculum developers should organize cultural materials within a conceptual framework which explains how to classify the behavior of any cultural group. This would help elementary and secondary students in social studies classes learn about their own and other cultures. This conceptual framework must represent all major realms of culture--concrete, human, and abstract--and be able to explain different dimensions of these realms. For example, in the concrete world, there is the material dimension involving fads, fashions, needs, wants, and consumer choices, and also a spatial dimension which determines how humans divide space into territories they can manage. In the human realm, external and internal dimensions influence social activity, interpersonal interactions, role modeling, and self-concept. In the abstract world, there are four dimensions--temporal, ideational, aesthetic, and spiritual. These dimensions influence how people measure time, construct and communicate ideas, seek beauty, and express faith through rituals, festivals, and religions. Educators can use conceptual framework based upon these abstract constructs to organize a curricular structure for social studies, view a given culture, study the culture of the classroom, and help students organize knowledge of themselves and their culture. (DB)

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CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION

A Basic Skill in Social Studies

by

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Cultural Analysis and Personal Identification: A Basic Skill for the Social Studies

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin this presentation in the same way that presentations of this type have been started for many years past--with a cliche. The social studies is in a state of ferment. This contention could have started a presentation at the first meeting of the National Council for Social Studies as well as this, the latest meeting. This unchanging point of view is, I believe, as much a reflection of society as it is a reflection of the social studies. As our society becomes more and more complex, as we realize that in our society the only constant is change, we begin to see that ferment seems to be the natural condition of cultures and societies these days. If this is true about society, it must then follow--as night the day--that it is true about social studies, the subject matter that reflects this society in the schools.

But the bubbles of this ferment are probably larger now than they have been for several years. If they are not larger, they are probably more deadly. The social studies in the schools of today face a challenge of survival. Schools are beset with the back-to-basics movement which defines basics as reading and writing or often in terms of student behavior, meaning sit down and shut up. In any case the social studies teachers are being called upon constantly to defend their existence in this time of philosophic change.

Let's look at this challeng and start with some "givens" in the current situation. The social studies in the schools are now multi-faceted. This is better than to say that they are in a state of ferment and far better than to say that they are in a state of chaos. However, two facets of the

social studies are now receiving a great deal of attention: multi-cultural education and global education.

Another given in the current situation is that the process of knowledge becomes far more important than the product of knowledge. To belabor the point: we live in a time of an explosion of knowledge which means that students cannot be expected to know everything that they will ever need to know. The schools can prepare the students in the realm of knowledge for only the first years after graduation from school. Then the knowledge explosion begins to replace old knowledge with new. It follows that the emphasis must be placed on how to learn more so than on what to learn.

A third force seems to be operating in the late 1970s. Without getting mired down in defining the causes, we can say that the Americans of today are rather withdrawn from a passionate involvement in the search for the common good. There seems to be a willing suspension of participation in the larger movements with a consequent turning to an involvement with the self. This self-ishness, if you will, this preoccupation with inner searchings has been called by some the decade of Narcissus.

These lead to our thesis: one of the basics that all students need to learn in the elementary and secondary schools is to learn how to learn about the cultures in which they and others operate. Through this examination of lives they will come to know others and also come to know themselves. In short, they can examine the quality of their own lives. Hence, the title of the presentation: Cultural Analysis and Personal Identification.

In order to obtain a total view of this subject we have to examine it both conceptually and operationally.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Cultural Analysis is a process drawn from ethnographic studies designed to allow a person to describe, with a degree of precision, how people behave in cultural settings. At this point, perhaps a few devinitions are in order.

The word culture has man connotations: one is the anthropological definition of a group of people living together; another, behaviors that people have who live together; still another definition is ahigh degree of rather esoteric learnings (he is a cultured man); and, of course, culture is defined in regard to the arts, crafts, literature, theater, music (the daily paper lists the cultural activities of the day).

So, in order to be more precise at this point, let us use the word ethos in place of culture. Now we shall speak of the ethos--meaning a group of people who live together, behaving in rather similar ways, following similar customs, traditions, and patterns of behavior. The ethos of a people is their characteristic spirit which comes from their accustomed ways of interacting with their world.

As we look at these patterns, we find certain universal concepts emerging which can be called the components of the ethos. These ethos components are an organized series of concepts which can classify the behavior of any cultural group.

In any culture humans operate in three realms: concrete, human, and abstract. Each of these realms have different dimensions: in the concrete world, there is the spatial dimension and the material dimension; in the human world, the external dimension (relation with others) and the internal dimension of the self; in the abstract world, there are four dimensions--temporal, ideational, aesthetic, and spiritual.

Let's look at this conceptual framework in detail. (See Appendix 1)

Concrete realm. Humans behave in a spatial dimension and divide space into territories they can manage, as a group and as an individual. They spend much effort and material in defining and defending the boundaries of that territory. As an example, it has been noted that the predominant American culture pattern defines personal space in an unusual way. Persons seem to live in an envelope of space, occasionally penetrating it as they shake hands. The extent of the feeling about space is measured by the fact that we apologize for bumping into someone--we've violated that envelope of space.

The concrete realm has the material dimension of the resources which they use in their lives. The material dimension of the American ethos is based on an abundance of material goods to the degree that yesterday's luxuries are today's necessities. The cultural norm is that of acquisition as more and more people try to possess more and more goods. With this proliferation comes the demands, real or imagined, dictated by fads and fashions. Needs and wants become confused; choice becomes more difficult.

Human realm. Any culture has a tangled web of human relationships. Any social organization from the most simple and primitive society to the most complex civilization is built on the premise that no man is an island living unto himself along. Behaviors are learned in order to lubricate the frictions of social life.

The American society, with its political dedication to individual freedoms, is constantly wrestling with the problem of finding an equilibrium between that freedom and the common good.

Children operate in this external dimension of the human realm as they begin to assume the roles defined for them by society and its institutions--sex roles, sibling roles, are but two which come to mind.

There is an internal dimension to this realm, also. In the interplay between the individual and the group, which is a hallmark of modern living the individual is called upon to play many roles. These roles place many complications in the way of personal identification--resulting in the age-old question "Who am I?"

Abstract realm. The human mind is blessed--or cursed--with the ability to deal with abstractions--mental constructions organized by a process which, like the traces of an electron, are visible only by their product. This highly sophisticated mental process, poorly understood at best, we call thinking. The whole idea of ideas is vastly abstract; it is difficult to think about thinking. It is doubly difficult to describe the idea of thought. But we shall plunge ahead--else what's a heaven for? This realm has four dimensions. A temporal dimension explores the rhythms and schedules by which humans live. An ideational dimension provides descriptions of the language, the methods of acculturation and ways in which a culture explains the world. The search for beauty is examined in the aesthetic dimension of this realm. Finally, the expressions of faith are explored in a spiritual dimension.

Spatial dimension. There are three key organizing concepts drawn from the field of geography. The first is the concept of location, where things are physically located on the globe or within the physical environment. The second organizing concept is the idea of environment--the total surroundings of man and groups of men. These environments can be better understood by grouping the characteristics around the subconcepts of landscape, region, and system. The third organizing concept is that of interaction within the environment. The interaction is addressed in use of personal space - territorality.

The material dimension. The relations of humans and the material world are described as the sum of the decisions made by individuals and groups as they attempt to satisfy an infinite number of wants with finite resources. Elucidation of this dimension involves a chain of key concepts, the first of which is scarcity--the idea that goods and material resources are finite. Scarcity in this sense means that there is a finite limit to the amount of material resources; it is not the opposite of plenty. The next concept is production, creating goods and services to satisfy the human wants which in turn involves the concept of the goods and services because they are the products created to satisfy the wants. This links to the concept of consumption--the use of the goods and services which are produced to satisfy the wants. Further along this interwoven chain of organizing concepts emerges thatof interdependence, for the production of goods and services demand on the part of the populace an ability to work together because no one can do it all. Two other key concepts emerges in the chain: the concept of exchange and the circular flow of income.

External dimensions to the human realm. Within the human realm are behaviors by individuals and groups resulting from the interaction with other individuals and groups. These form, again, a chain of certian key organizing concepts. The role of the individual is a concept which leads to that of institution--formally organized groups of individuals which in many ways determine the roles for those individuals. This idea naturally leads to a discussion of the process of definition or roles that individuals fulfill in society--the concept of socialization. The quality of the role performance is determined by the norms--the accepted patterns of behavior

which are defined for the individual. These patterns are defined for the individual as s/he functions in institutionalized roles after socialization. Arising now is the concept of sanction--the "penalties" inflicted upon the individual who has not functioned according to the general norm. Next is the concept of power, the right or privilege of exercising control over others. Extending from this power is the final concept of legitimacy, meaning the acceptability of the power used for sanction or control of the normal definitions of the roles that people play in institutions.

Internal dimension of the human realm. This dimension deals with the relations with one's self, with one's own personal view--with the way in which one is unique. The organizing concepts in this dimension are fewer but no less important than in the others. The primary concept is identity--the ability to see one's self as a separate, unique individual; metaphorically, this is the process of holding a mirror to one's self to see what is in that mirror. An extension of this idea is the concept of privacy which is, in a sense, the internalization of one's indentity, revealing it as one chooses. Identity has a quality which needs to be considered here which may be called the quality of maintenance--the control of an individual over his mental and physical self so that a state of well being is established.

The temporal dimension of the abstract realm. The human measures time and time in turn, measures the human, as life proceeds in rhythms and cycles. But the measures differ from culture to culture resulting in different rhythms and schedules.

The ideational dimension. Humans have the marvelous capacity to construct and communicate ideas beyond palpable realities. The ideas are

expressed in language which differs from culture to culture and within cultures. The language in turn becomes a medium for the way in which the cultural heritage is continued through generations in the institutions of acculturation/education. This heritage is a determining factor in the ways in which people explain their world--using superstitions, myths or perhaps some rational logic.

The aesthetic dimensions of the abstract realm. Humans abstract ideas from immediate reality and aspire to some heights of experience greater than that reality defining these as beauty. The formal aesthetic aspirations are expressed in the plastic arts, drama and literature, the performing arts. In less disciplined, more spontaneous ways humans have an informal expression in their own participation in leisure time activities which we have learned to call recreational.

The spiritual dimension. The last of these seven dimensions is the most complex and least describably of them all. Probing the recesses of faith means we have to deal with the paradox of expressing the inexpressible. We can, however, analyze and describe some manifestations of that faith in some of the rituals, festivals, and religions.

THE OPERATION OF CULTURAL ANALYSIS

From these rather abstract constructs let us turn to some concrete operations. This idea of cultural analysis can be used in several ways:

1. A whole curricular structure for social studies can be organized around these concepts.

2. A view of a particular culture under examination can be organized around this matrix.

3. Knowledge of the culture of one's own classroom can be organized in this way.

4. Finally, pupils can organize knowledges of their own culture and self round this mode.

We can readily describe how individuals and groups operate in the dimensions of these realms using these concepts as decriptors. An organized analysis and description produces a profile of configuration of a culture.

We can move beyond this examination of group behaviors to an examination of individual behaviors and also produce a profile of an individual in a culture. Appendix II contains a first attempt at this.

This profile organizes a person's knowledge about himself and his own culture. These knowledges come from a systematic observation of the behaviors of the group and a systematic self-observation of their own behaviors. These observations add up to a view of the self.

CONCLUSION

We mentioned at the outset that there are forces at work that shape the social studies today: there is too much knowledge to transmit, there is a search for defining the basics, there is a society outside the school which is solopsistic at best, Narcissistic at worst.

It is our thesis in this paper that we can bring these forces together in the teaching of the social studies by

1. using the Ethos Components described here. We can engage our students in a process of analysis of cultures, a process that they can use constantly.

2. adding one more "R" to the basic three R's. To the basic reading, writing, 'rithmetic we can add rationality, a predictable, systematic way of organizing the information of the world around.

3. putting this rational process to the task of self-identification.

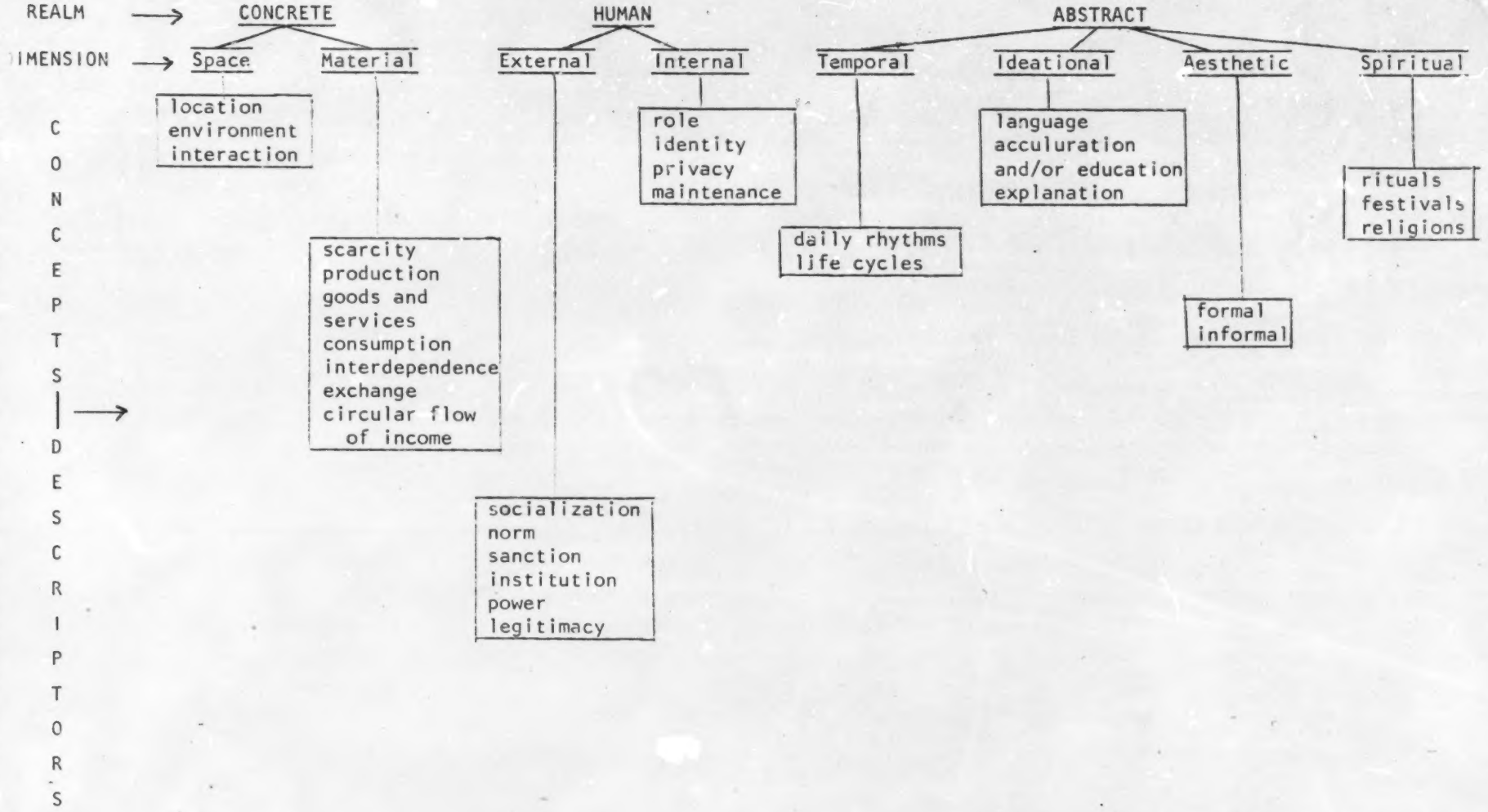
If this is the age of Narcissus, let there be thinking Narcissi.

Believing with Socrates that "an unexamined life is not worth living," we urge that the process of examination can be made rational. But this view is incomplete; the human has dimensions beyond the cognitive. Human life is an interplay between the forces of the intellect and the emotions. From this interplay comes the quality of the life the person leads.

We believe that this examination we urge will go a long way toward defining the quality of life which we can lead. There is nothing more basic in schooling than this search for quality. The social studies is the arena for this search

Appendix I

ETHOS COMPONENTS



APPENDIX II

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step. Here is an questionnaire and results from 25 college students preparing to be social studies teachers. We can derive generalizations about that group from these data.

Questionnaire

1. While attending the University do you live in (check all pertinent)
   a. apartment 12 b. dormitory 3 c. room in a home 1
   d. rented house 3 e. own house 4

2. How many people share your lodging?
   a. one 6 b. two 7 c. three 6
   b. four 2 e. more 5

3. How large is your hometown:
   a. under 5,000 8 b. from 5,000-50,000 13 c. from 50,000 -500,000 1
   d. from 500,000-1,000,000 2 e. over 1,000,000 2

4. In what region of the state is your hometown?
   a. Northeast 2 b. Southeast 4 c. Central 7
   d. Northwest 4 e. Southwest 9

5. How many hours per week are you employed in a job for which you're paid?
   a. none 15 b. 1-10 3 c. 10-20 6
   d. 20-30 2 e. 30-40

6. Are you supported in school by
   a. your personal saving only 3 b. family only 3
   c. outside assistance (loan, scholarship, etc.) 3 d. a combination of all 17
   e. none of above

7. How much is your discretionary disbursement per week?
   a. 0-$25 16 b. $26-50 8 c. $50-75 1
   d. $75-100 0 e. more 1

8. Are you (or have you been) a member of a fraternity or sorority?
   a. yes 5 b. no 21

9. Are you in a personal relationship with a member of the opposite sex which has lasted more than 3 months.
   a. yes 12 b. no 14

10. How many people are in your immediate family?
    a. 0-1 b. 2-3 8 c. 4-6 11
    d. 6-9 5 e. 10 or more 2

11. Which social class are you in ?
    a. lower 1 b. lower-middle 8 c. middle 15
    d. upper middle 2 e. upper 0

12. Which economic bracket is your family?
    a. lower 0 b. lower-middle 8 c. middle 12
    d. upper middle 6 e. upper 0

13. How many roles do you have in your life?
    a. 0-1 1 b. 2-3 9 c. 3-4 5
    d. 5 or more 11

14. Which of the following comes closes to your ideas about diet.
    a. my diet is chosen by what tastes good 10
    b. my diet is chosen by others 0
    c. my diet is prescribed by a doctor 0
    d. my diet is chosen to lose/gain weight 1
    e. my diet is chosen on the basis of health 15

15. Which of the following comes closest to your ideas about exercise?
    a. when I feel need of exercise & lie down until the feeling passes 0
    b. I don't have a regular program of exercise but I know I should 9
    c. I get plenty of exercise but not systematically 8
    d. I have a regular program of exercise 6
    e. other 3

16. Do you regard yourself as an adult?
    a. yes 21 b. no 5

17. Which of the following did you (or do you plan to) do on your 21st birthday?
    a. had a small party with immediate family 7
    b. had a small part with firends 10
    c. had a large party 2
    d. toured the bars 5
    e. did not celebrate with anyone 1

18. Which of the following languages do you speak?
    a. Spanish 2 b. Polish 0 c. street 2
    d. Italian 1 e. None besides English 19

19. Which of the following most closely expresses your ideas about astrology?
    a. I consult the chart daily 0
    b. Its ideas govern my behavior generally 0
    c. I can name my own sign 16
    d. I don't use it but don't object to others using it 8
    e. I try to dissuage others from using it 1

20. My favorite form of relaxation is found
    a. by myself 3
    b. with a small group my age I know well 15
    c. with my family 8
    d. with a small group my age I don't know well 0
    e. with a large group 0

21. My favorite form of relaxation is
    a. in a passive activity such as reading or listening to music 5
    b. sleeping 1
    c. in some physical activity 10

21. continued
    d. in some creative activity 5
    e. partying 5

22. How many times have you seen the Rocky Horror Show?
    a. 0 19 b. 1 1 c. 2 3
    d. 3 1 e. 4 or more ?

23. Of the following TV series, I would prefer to watch:
    a. 60 Minutes 10
    b. Charlie's Angels 1
    c. Masterpiece Theatre 5
    d. Saturday Night Live 10
    e. All of My Children 0

24. On a Saturday afternoon in fall I would prefer to
    a. clean my room/apartment/house 0
    b. go shopping 1
    c. study 0
    d. go to a football game 18
    e. participat in some sport 6

25. Which of the following expresses your attitude toward religious services?
    a. I attend regularly 6
    b. I should attend more than I do 9
    c. I attend occasionally 3
    d. I attend more than I should 1
    e. I attend infrequently or not at all 7

		No Answer	Wrong	Right
A.	What is Boswash, Chipitts and Sansan?	10	5	10
B.	What is meant by a growth economy	6	4	15
C.	What is the conflict between the First Amendment and the Sixth Amendment	18	4	3
D.	What is ERA?	1	0	24
E.	Name a rite of passage in the American culture.	4	5	16
F.	Name the two Pennsylvania senators	2	3	20
G.	What is the voucher system?	15	9	1
H.	What is cloning	0	1	24
I.	Name the gubenatorial candidates in Pennsylvania	4	1	20
J.	Name a living American			
	movie director	2	1	22
	stage actress	7	3	15
	sculptor	22	1	2
	architect	15	8	2
	jazz artist	3	1	21
	classical music artist	10	1	14